

# ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council  
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association  
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

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No. 11/26th Year

March 20th, 1959.



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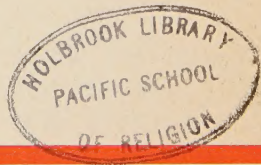
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Church "Fraternal Workers" in Unconventional Retreat

(Glion, Switzerland) - The Bible and a modern novel were studied together by sixty-five church workers from nine different countries in a four-day "retreat" held in the Swiss resort of Glion, above Montreux, March 11 - 16.

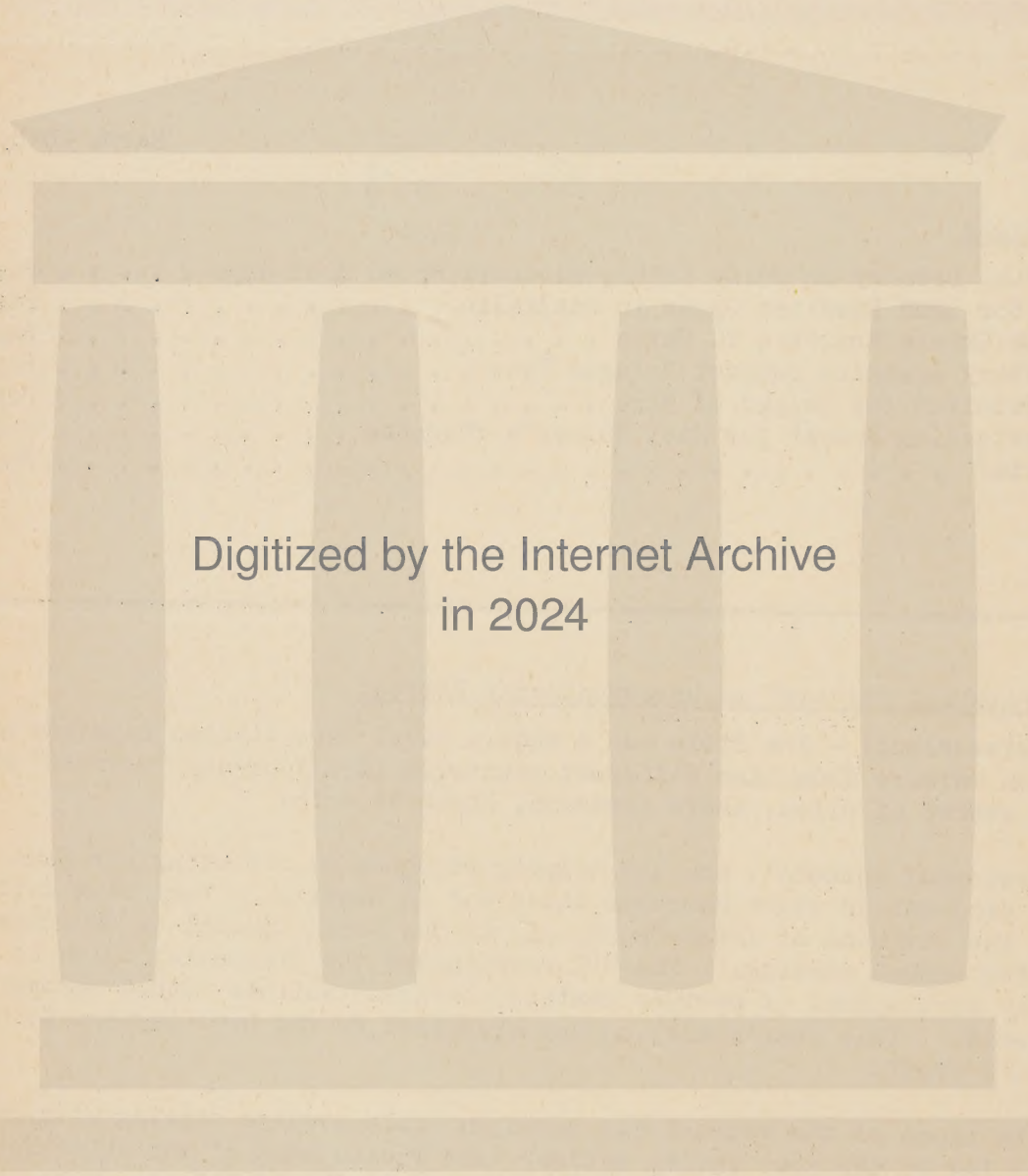
The "fraternal workers", who are helping refugees or assisting European churches, came from projects in eight European lands and in Algeria. They were called together by the Division of Inter-Church Aid of the World Council of Churches for this twelfth annual meeting. The WCC coordinates the programme, which is made possible by development of postwar contacts between churches within Europe and others abroad. This year's meeting was organized by the Rev. Raymond E. Maxwell of the WCC's staff.

The main theme of the retreat was based on Bible studies dealing with reconciliation, led by the Rev. Philip Potter, West Indian head of the WCC's Youth Department. Some sessions were then used to focus the Bible's teaching on the situation of an "unreconciled" modern man, the controversial hero of the novel "The Outsider" by French Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus. Conference members dramatised situations from the book and attempted to come to grips with the attitude of modern men and women who have lost all faith in God and in human values.



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Another starting point for discussion was the film "The Broken Mask", dealing with race division in the church and made in the United States for the National Council of Churches. Participants tried to find ways of dealing with personal problems they meet in their daily activity by linking the Bible studies on Jeremiah, Ephesians and St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians with the issues raised by the book and the film.

The dramatisations and discussions were coordinated by Dr. Leslie Cooke, director of the WCC's Inter-Church Aid Division, who acted as retreat leader, and by the Rev. John Garrett, Australian director of the WCC's Information Department, who formed a team with Philip Potter and underlined "contemporary meanings" of the Bible studies by telling stories of unusual new forms of Christian activity in the modern world.

A high point in the meeting was a Sunday morning celebration of the Orthodox Liturgy by Archimandrite Emilian Timiades, acting representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople at the WCC's headquarters in Geneva. In an introduction to the liturgy, Father Timiades emphasized its continuity in Orthodox thought with the daily life of all believers and its role in reconciling God and man, man and fellow-man and the living on earth with the triumphant Church in heaven.

The meeting, which closed with a service led by Dr. Cooke and addressed by Dr. Charles W. Arbuthnot, field representative in Europe of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, brought together workers from about fifteen different church backgrounds, scattered over Italy, France, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, Poland, and the United Kingdom. EPS, Geneva

#### Doctrine Primary in Unity Talks, Missouri Synod Head Says

(St. Louis, Missouri) - The president of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has reiterated his church's willingness to take part in talks on Lutheran unity provided "doctrinal discussions are a primary item on the agenda".

Writing to Dr. Paul C. Empie, executive director of the National Lutheran Council, Dr. Behnken said that "only through doctrinal discussions may true unity in doctrine be achieved, which is a prerequisite for church fellowship". He said that the letter was to correct impressions that the Missouri Synod is not willing to take part in conversations regarding Lutheran unity.

Dr. Behnken said these false impressions had resulted from a letter he wrote last month to the NLC declining a council invitation to join in exploratory talks leading to possible affiliation of the two groups. (See EPS No. 6) He had said that the doctrinal positions of seven of the eight bodies in the council now involved in two mergers are in a "state of flux". In his new letter, Dr. Behnken said that he withdrew this comment to avoid "further confusion or misunderstanding" and because his statement had been interpreted as a judgment of the groups. EPS, Geneva

#### Home for Aged Russians Opens in Australia

(Cabramatta) - A home for twenty aged White Russian refugees from China was opened in ceremonies on March 8 and 9 at Cabramatta, near Sydney. The home was built by the World Council of Churches and the Russian Relief Association, with special grants from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Australian government.





On Sunday, March 8, more than 500 members of Sydney's Russian Orthodox community attended a service at the home when it was blessed by Archbishop Savva. The home was officially opened on March 9 by Bishop W.G. Hilliard, Anglican coadjutor bishop of Sydney and a member of the Resettlement Committee of Australia's national Christian council.

About 4,500 White Russians have gone to Australia since 1952, more than 4,000 of them assisted by the World Council of Churches. Plans call for bringing another 1,000 to 2,000 this year. The first seven residents of the home at Cabramatta arrived in Australia on March 11. The Australian Council is planning to begin a second home for ten aged Russians at Healesville, forty miles from Melbourne.

EPS, Geneva

#### Church Crises Reported in China

(London) - Reports from China indicate "critical developments" in the situation of the churches there, according to a statement released in the United Kingdom by the Standing Committee of the Conference of Missionary Societies.

According to reports first released by the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, there is a process of compulsory unification of the major Protestant denominations going on, a reduction in local congregations and a turning over of unused church property to the government. The reports say that of 65 church buildings in Peking only four remain. Between twelve and twenty-three of Shanghai's 200 churches are reported to still be open for united services.

The Standing Committee warns that all the facts about the Chinese situation are not known and points out that "it is not easy to be sure of the right interpretation of the facts that are known. It could be that what is happening is part of China's 'grand leap forward' into the great social and economic experiment of communes in which every section of the community is involved. It could be that the Chinese churches are regarding 'church divisions and denominational names as vestiges of Western nationalism' ... The available information indicates that the reorganization of the churches at the local, provincial and national levels is being made the responsibility of the churches themselves under the general direction of the 'Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee'." EPS, Geneva

#### Voluntary Agencies Support Refugee Year

(Geneva) - An International Committee for World Refugee Year has been set up in Geneva by twenty-one voluntary agencies to back the World Refugee Year which will be launched in June by the United Nations.

The new committee was formed on March 11 by the Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies Working for Refugees, headed by Dr. Edgar H.S. Chandler, director of the World Council of Churches' Service to Refugees. Chairman of the international committee is Dr. Elfan Rees of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, a joint agency of the WCC and the International Missionary Council. Co-chairman is Mr. Charles H. Jordan of the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Through the International Committee, the agencies will seek to cooperate fully during the World Refugee Year.

EPS, Geneva





### Aid Received for Island of Niue

(Geneva) - Gifts totalling \$8,200 have been received at the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches' Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees in response to an appeal to aid residents on the hurricane damaged island of Niue in the South Pacific.

Hit by a hurricane on February 26, the island was reported to be "generally devastated", with 180 homes, three mission schools and church property destroyed. Niue is one of the Tonga islands and has a population of 5,000. Only five persons were reported injured in the 120-mile-an-hour hurricane, but food and water supplies were destroyed.

In appealing to the Division for help, the London Missionary Society said that "there is no doubt that the damage is very heavy and that the congregations in Niue will certainly not be able themselves to carry the burden of rebuilding". Almost the entire population of the island is associated with churches founded by the society.

The United Church of Canada has sent \$3,000 for the stricken island; the British Council of Churches, \$2,800; Sweden, \$1,000; and Germany, \$1,400.

A supply of bread, rice and canned meat and fish will be shipped from New Zealand to Niue on March 24.

Churches at Alofi and Tamakatoga and three pastors' homes were completely destroyed during the storm. Reports say that other church property was "severely damaged" but that priority concerns are for health, food and clothing. Rehabilitation schemes are yet to be devised.

EPS, Geneva

### Understanding Sought for East Europe's Churches

(Cologne) - An appeal for understanding of the situation of churches in Eastern Europe has been issued by Dr. Hanfried Krüger, director of the Central Ecumenical Office of the German churches at Frankfurt.

In a speech at Cologne Dr. Krüger listed three insights that had kept contacts open since the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches in the USA in 1954. He said these insights were "that Christ died for all men, in both Eastern and Western blocs, that faith in Christ is stronger than all political tensions" and "that we must not leave the people in Eastern Europe in isolation".

Dr. Krüger warned against condemning the churches in Eastern Europe. He said church life was active there, in spite of oppression. According to Dr. Krüger many Christians in Eastern Europe feel responsibility toward the socialist state simply because they are Christians.

The German church leader said that Christians in Western Europe must be more modest and not pretend that everything in the West is in order. Christians from both sides should try together to find the foundation of true Christian life in the light of the Bible.

EPS, Geneva





In Brief

Beirut Radio has announced that it will no longer broadcast sermons from churches and mosques because of recent sermons that were hostile to the government. From now on, the government statement said, religious talks will be restricted to those originating in the radio station.

\* \*

The Rev. Marjorie Inkster, a congregational minister, has been named assistant minister at London's famous City Temple. She will serve under Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead, a Methodist, who has been pastor of the Congregational church for the past 22 years.

\* \*

Greek Orthodox Archbishop-elect James of North and South America will sail for the United States on March 26, where he will succeed the late Archbishop Michael of New York. Named to the post late last month (see EPS, No. 7) the new archbishop has been in Istanbul conferring with the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. Before his election to the new post he was the representative of the Patriarch at the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches.

\* \*

Pastor Martin Niemöller and Dr. Heinz Kloppenburg, well-known German church leaders, led a vigil at the airport in Dortmund, Westphalia, to protest against the stationing of a British rocket unit in the area. The protesting group held burning torches in front of posters that said "Stop Atomic Warfare" and "No Atomic Weapons in Europe".

\* \*

The Leipzig Spring Trade Fair in East Germany was again marked by special events run by the churches. Protestant exhibits and acts of worship were attended by many visitors to the fair. Four hundred people attended a meeting arranged by the Evangelical Alliance and East and West German Christians exchanged greetings at a "miniature Kirchentag" organized by the Leipzig Protestant men's associations.

\* \*

Twenty-four theological students from fourteen countries, who are studying in Germany on World Council of Churches scholarships, will visit parishes of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland on speaking tours in the month of April. The plan is intended to introduce the students to the life of the parishes and of a German industrial region.

\* \*

The Calvin Jubilee celebrations in France in May include special offerings in parishes of the French Reformed Church. The church has suggested local efforts to build new halls, churches, youth centres, and recreation and study centres. A scholarship fund for student exchanges will also be created.

\* \*

Dr. Heinrich Riedel of Munich has been elected to succeed the late Bishop Volkmar Hertrich as president of the Social Work Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

\* \*

The Society of Friends (Quakers) in Switzerland has asked the Swiss Federal Government to can the country's surplus milk and send it to children in Africa and Asia.

\* \*







At the International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops held in Bonn, the Bishop of the Croat National Old Catholic Church in Yugoslavia was received as a member.

\* \*

Old Catholic Bishop Engelbertus Lagerwey of Deventer, Netherlands, has died at Utrecht. The bishop, who had been active in the ecumenical movement since 1927, became the secretary of the Dutch Ecumenical Council on its formation in 1946. He often acted as intermediary between the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in the Netherlands during the war.

\* \*

Concern has been expressed in church circles in East Germany about the government permission given for the publication of a new "Protestant Pastors' Journal" by the government-approved Protestant Pastors' Association. The new association is reported to have only eighty members, some of them retired. Permission has been denied by the government for a paper for Protestant youth in the DDR.

\* \*

Andreas Rinkel, Archbishop of Utrecht and president of the International Conference of Old Catholic bishops, has announced that participation of Old Catholic churches in the forthcoming Roman Catholic general council would depend on the form of any invitation extended. He said the Old Catholic churches would discuss their attitude with Orthodox and Anglican churches before reaching a decision.

\* \*

The Swiss Bible Society is arranging for Bibles in four languages to be made available in bedrooms of all Swiss hotels.

\* \*

The synods of the state Church of the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland and the Free Church of the same canton have given an affirmative answer to the question put to them as to whether they favoured reunion of the two churches. Further conversations between designated representatives of the churches have been authorised, with a view to establishing a future autonomous church, working in close relationship with the state.

EPS, Geneva



